

Last Words

A collection of epigrammatic epitaphs

By Sylvia Lyons

When the time comes, playwright Arthur Miller wants his epitaph to read:

YOU WERE SAYING . . .

Humorist Art Buchwald suggests that his read:

I AM HERE UNDER PROTEST

Attorney Louis Nizer requests:

JUST PASSING THROUGH

Entertainer George Burns wants merely:

I WISH I WAS READING THIS

Instead of a tombstone, Joan Rivers wishes to be memorialized by a mausoleum; she says it provides more closet space.

Former President Harry Truman requested, and got:

A GOOD PUBLIC SERVANT

Clark Gable asked for nothing more than:

BACK TO THE SILENTS

The first known epitaphs, which go back to the earliest Egyptians, were dull. Not until Elizabethan England did epitaphs begin to assume something of a literary character. Of all the old ones, undoubtedly the best known is Shakespeare's, which concludes with:

AND CURST BE HE
THAT REMOVES MY BONES

Probably referred to almost as often is the couplet to be found on the headstone over the grave of the distinguished English architect Sir John Vanbrugh:

LIE HEAVY ON HIM, EARTH, FOR HE
LAID MANY A HEAVY LOAD ON THEE

It often happened that an epitaph was written that gave a somewhat misleading impression, as, for example, the one in Old Farm Cemetery in Middletown, Connecticut:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
CHARLES AND VARLYE
SONS OF LOVING PARENTS
WHO DIED IN INFANCY

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In the same cemetery is another clinker, written by the widow of Mr. Oakes:

TO THE MEMORY OF
ABRAHAM BEAULIEU
BORN 15 SEPTEMBER 1822
ACCIDENTALLY SHOT
4 APRIL 1844
AS A MARK OF AFFECTION
FROM HIS BROTHER

Collecting interesting epitaphs is a hobby for thousands of people, some hundreds of whom, it seems, have published books on the subject. And in the genealogical section of every major public library there are innumerable unpublished epitaph anthologies. Almost all the collections copy from one another, and the majority are undoubtedly apocryphal, presenting names of the deceased but no dates of birth or death. Many of them seek to elicit a smile at, perhaps, an inappropriate moment. An example, alleged to exist in a cemetery in Edinburgh, Scotland, is:

BENEATH THIS STONE A LUMP OF CLAY
LIES UNCLE PETER DANIELS
WHO EARLY IN THE MONTH OF MAY
TOOK OFF HIS WINTER FLANNELS

Allegedly carved in stone in a small cemetery near Albany, New York, is:

HERE LIES
HENRY EDSSEL SMITH
BORN 1903 DIED 1942
LOOKED UP THE ELEVATOR SHAFT
TO SEE IF THE CAR WAS ON
THE WAY DOWN.
IT WAS

From Scotland comes the following:

HERE BENEATH THIS STONE LIE I
BACK TO BACK MY WIFE AND I
AND WHEN THE ANGELS TRUMP
SHALL TRILL
IF SHE GETS UP I'LL LIE STILL

Confirmed in the Boot Hill Cemetery, in Tombstone, Arizona, is:
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A Taste Of Bavaria At Bierfest Time

Gastronomic Gemütlichkeit in Munich at bierfest time

By Claire Hardiman

Hearty food, good beer, and lively conversation are hallmarks of the Bavarian life-style. All this is epitomized by Munich's Oktoberfest, that yearly bacchanal of bratwurst and beer commemorating the wedding of Crown Prince Ludwig to Princess Theresia, held in Munich in 1810. For two exuberant weeks, people throng the city's Theresia Meadow fairground to ride the carousels and roller coasters, listen to the brass bands, enjoy barbe-

sumed in local beer halls. The six largest breweries—Augustiner, Hacker-Pschorr, Hofbräu, Löwenbräu, Paulaner-Thomasbräu, and Spaten-Franziskaner—are all located in Munich.

Bavarian beer has a very distinctive flavor. In part, this results from the Law of Purity, which since 1516 has required that breweries use only four natural ingredients—barley, hops, yeast, and water. By contrast, many American producers use corn, rice, and various

basic brewing procedure is the same—the barley is germinated and roasted; hops are added to the resultant malt and simmered in huge kettles; and the resultant wort is then fermented in carefully tended tank-filled cellars. The darker color and heavier taste of dunkles bier are produced by baking the barley at a higher temperature and allowing the brew to ferment for longer periods of time.

Most brewers make several standard labels, as well as a few that are characteristic of a particular season or region. For example, the beer served at Oktoberfest is called märzenbier because it's brewed the previous March. Bockbier, a dark and sweetish brew fairly well known in America, is made in fall and drunk the following spring. Pilsner, originally from Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, but now also made in Bavaria, is light in color with a strong taste of hops. Weissbier, which is fermented from wheat and has a cloudy appearance and a sharp tang, is a Munich specialty.

The southernmost region of Germany, Bavaria has long held itself apart from the rest of the country. Munich, its beautiful capital, was the seat of the Dukes of Wittelsbach and is a center of southern German culture, with many museums, fountains, gardens, and churches. Bavarians speak a dialect that is different from, and sometimes incomprehensible to, their northern neighbors, and they claim to be more friendly and fun-loving in temperament. That is certainly evident in their attitude toward food; Bavarian cuisine is robust and nourishing, concentrating on a wide variety of sausages. Roast duck, veal, and pork also appear frequently on Bavarian menus, accompanied by rich gravies and freshly made noodles called *spätzle*. Fish is steamed or grilled and eaten with buttered potatoes. Bavarian cuisine is almost always at its best when accompanied by a regional beer.

Typically Bavarian, and appropriate



German National Tourist Authority

Draft horses drawing draft beer in the Oktoberfest parade.

cued sausages, and quaff liters—some 4 million liters—of beer.

Beer has been brewed in this area for centuries. Today, about 1,000 kinds are produced in Bavaria, most of these made by small village breweries and con-

preservatives. Bavarian beers are also somewhat stronger than their American counterparts, usually containing 4 to 6 percent alcohol as compared to 2 to 3 percent in the United States.

Although each brewery has its own recipe varying the proportions and preparation of the ingredients, Bavarian beers generally fall into two categories, light (*helles*) and dark (*dunkles*). The

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HERE LIES
LESTER MOORE
FOUR SLUGS FROM A FORTY-FOUR
NO LES
NO MORE

Here and there an epitaph manages to be practical as well as sentimental, as one may note from the words in the graveyard Père-Lachaise, in Paris. They were written by Mme. Cabachard:

HIS INCONSOLABLE WIDOW
DEDICATES THIS MONUMENT
TO HER HUSBAND'S MEMORY
AND CONTINUES THE SAME BUSINESS
AT THE OLD STAND,
167 RUE MOUFFETARD

Dr. Fred Roberts, who died in 1931 and whose remains are in Pine Log Cemetery in Brookland, Arkansas, apparently felt his patients might care to know his new address. The marker over his grave says merely:

OFFICE UP STAIRS

In Hegdon, England, an authenticated stone reads:

HERE LIES THE BODY OF
WILLIAM STRUTTON OF PADRINGTON
BURIED THE 18TH DAY OF MAY, 1734
AGED 97

WHO HAD BY HIS FIRST WIFE
TWENTY-EIGHT CHILDREN
AND BY THE SECOND SEVENTEEN
OWN FATHER TO FORTY-FIVE
GRANDFATHER TO EIGHTY-SIX
GREAT-GRANDFATHER
TO NINETY-SEVEN

AND GREAT-GREAT-GRANDFATHER
TO TWENTY-THREE
IN ALL, TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY-ONE

In the good old days, when domestic help was commonplace, the British memorialized their servants. Cemeteries in Surrey, Yorkshire, Suffolk, Sussex, Westmoreland, and Warwickshire all contain thousands of epitaphs testifying to the lifetime devotion of housekeepers, cooks, maids, butlers, footmen, and nurses. Altogether typical is the inscription in Besford Cemetery, near Persbore, Worcestershire:

IN MEMORY OF
NATHANIEL BELL
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE

THE 24TH OF MAY, 1820
AGED 88 YEARS
HAVING FAITHFULLY SERVED THE
SEBRIGHT FAMILY UPWARDS OF
60 YEARS
ALSO OF HIS WIDOW SARAH
WHO DIED APRIL 26TH, 1821
AGED 77 YEARS
HAVING FAITHFULLY SERVED THE
SAME FAMILY NEARLY AS LONG

No epitaph in America is better known than the one that Benjamin Franklin prepared for himself in 1728:

THE BODY OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, PRINTER (LIKE THE COVER OF AN OLD BOOK, ITS CONTENTS TORN OUT AND STRIPPED OF ITS LETTERING AND GILDING), LIES HERE, FOOD FOR WORMS, BUT THE WORK SHALL NOT BE LOST, FOR IT WILL (AS HE BELIEVED) APPEAR ONCE MORE IN A NEW AND MORE ELEGANT EDITION, BUT REVISED AND CORRECTED BY THE AUTHOR

Franklin died in 1790, and his grave in Philadelphia carries only the dates of his birth and death.

Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, nineteenth-century English novelist, most famous for *John Halifax, Gentleman*, wrote her own epitaph shortly before her death:

AND WHEN I LIE IN THE GREEN
KIRKYARD,
WITH THE MOLD UPON MY BREAST
SAY NOT THAT SHE DID WELL, OR ILL,
ONLY, SHE DID HER BEST

Dr. William P. Rothwell was known for cadging free meals from a local restaurant. He is buried in Oak Grove Cemetery, in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Other than his name and the dates 1866-1939, his gravestone says nothing but:

THIS IS ON ME

A lawyer buried in a cemetery in Rockford, Illinois, is identified by:

GOEMBEL
JOHN E.
1867-1945
"THE DEFENSE RESTS"

Often quoted, but not confirmed, is

the epitaph over the grave of Arthur C. Homans in Cleveland, Ohio:

ONCE I WASN'T
THEN I WAS
NOW I AIN'T AGAIN

Also oft-quoted but unconfirmed is the epitaph reputedly to be found in a cemetery in Ruidos, New Mexico:

HERE LIES
JOHNNY YEAST
PARDON ME
FOR NOT RISING

The beloved daughter of Mark Twain died young. For the stone over her grave, her father wrote the epitaph:

WARM SUMMER SUN,
SHINE KINDLY HERE;
WARM SOUTHERN WIND,
BLOW SOFTLY HERE;
GREEN SOD ABOVE,
LIE LIGHT, LIE LIGHT—
GOOD-NIGHT, DEAR HEART,
GOOD NIGHT, GOOD NIGHT.

In the South, probably no epitaph is better known than that marking the burial place of South Carolinian James Pettigrew, who opposed secession but remained loyal to the Confederate cause once the Civil War began:

UNAWAYED BY OPINION
UNSEDUCED BY FLATTERY
UNDISMAYED BY DISASTER
HE CONFRONTED LIFE
WITH ANTIQUE
COURAGE
AND DEATH WITH CHRISTIAN HOPE

But perhaps none of the epitaphs written for human beings surpasses in gentleness this one, which is reprinted in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*:

NEAR THIS SPOT ARE DEPOSITED
THE REMAINS OF ONE WHO POSSESSED BEAUTY WITHOUT VANITY,
STRENGTH WITHOUT FEROCITY,
AND ALL THE VIRTUES OF MAN,
WITHOUT HIS VICES. THIS PRAISE,
WHICH WOULD BE UNMEANING
FLATTERY IF INSCRIBED OVER HUMAN ASHES, IS BUT A JUST TRIBUTE
TO THE MEMORY OF BOATSWAIN,
A DOG.

SKIING

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parallel skiing. In Class V, you are taught linked parallel turns and how to survive in deep powder. Class VI puts it all together and adds a little hot dog. Class VII, which is rarely offered, is for prospective racers. It's up to you to register for the appropriate class. If you sign up for one that's too advanced, you'll find yourself demoted the first day; you'll be pushed up a grade immediately if your instructor decides that you are superior to the group.

After everybody has been sorted out, you stick with your class for the rest of the session. On the following Friday afternoon you "graduate," and then it's all over but the traditional party in honor of your instructor. If you stay a second week, chances are you'll advance a step up the ladder. Keep in mind that in that second session the teaching staff expands to include a number of women who are specialists in handling children. So if you want to bring the kids along, that's the time to come.

Last year's course was held in Grindelwald, in the Alps above Bern. This year's course will take place at Crans-Montana, in the French-speaking canton of Valais. This is a comparatively new resort with superb ski terrain in the Rhone Valley above the city of Sion, about 2½ hours from Geneva. A veritable spiderweb of lifts—two aerial trams, six gondolas, two chair lifts, and sixteen T-bars—provides access to more than sixty miles of runs with vertical drops of up to nearly 5,000 feet. Most of the downhill runs are of medium difficulty: you can ski them hard and fast down the fall-line bumps, or take them easy in wide traverses. Moreover, the area is ideal for December skiing. Most of the slopes face in a general southerly direction and gets lots of sunshine (tans are practically guaranteed).

Practical Matters

The seven-day package provides for check-in at your hotel on Saturday, with departure one week later. This means that you depart for Geneva on Friday night, arriving early the next morning (Swissair is the only direct carrier from the United States). But just because Crans-Montana is so close—a fast train ride past the Castle of Chillon and you are almost there—don't expect to be skiing on the Saturday of your arrival. Travel agents who tout Alpine resorts on the basis of their proximity to intercontinen-

The Swiss National Tourist Office can provide registration forms and more information about the Swiss Ski School Directors' Course. It has offices at 608 Fifth Ave.; New York, NY 10020 (212-757-5944); 104 S. Michigan Ave.; Chicago, IL 60603 (312-641-0050); 250 Stockton St.; San Francisco, CA 94108 (415-362-2260); Box 215; Commerce Court Postal Station, Toronto, Ontario M5L 1E8 (416-868-0584). Or you can write directly to the Swiss Ski School Association; CH-6490 Andermatt;

AVANT-SKI

Switzerland. The course registration deadline this year is November 20. A travel-ski package is available through *Steve Lohr's Skiworld*, 3 E. 54th St.; New York, NY 10022 (212-751-3250 or 800-223-1306). For skiers wishing to make their own arrangements, contact a travel agent or Swissair (800-221-4750; or in New York, 212-995-8400). For charter flights, contact *Travac* (800-223-1077; in New York, 212-563-3303; in California, 415-392-4610).



tal airports often tell you that this gives you an extra half day on the slopes. Nonsense. You'll be glad to have that afternoon of rest after being disgorged from a 747. In any case, you'll want to be in good shape for the fun on Sunday.

It's far better that you depart the United States on Thursday night, taking advantage of Swissair's special mid-week bargain fare of \$546 roundtrip (tickets must be purchased twenty-one days in advance). This way you'll arrive in Geneva on Friday morning, giving you that day to travel to Crans-Montana and relax. The extra night at your hotel, meals included, will cost you \$50 to \$100, depending on where you stay, but you'll have all day Saturday to get used to your skis, and by Sunday you'll be set to make the most of your class.

The top hotel in Crans-Montana is the five-star *Crans Ambassador*. It offers all the amenities from a pool to saunas, from a house bar to a French restaurant. Every room has a south-facing private balcony overlooking the Rhone Valley,

4,000 feet below, and, beyond it, the improbably high peaks of the Matterhorn and Mont Blanc side of the Valais. The Ambassador's rate for the ski-course package is about \$405.

But you needn't spend that much. The same package at the four-star *Mirabeau*, which is equally modern but more like a cozy Swiss chalet, comes to about \$360. And you'll pay even less at three-star hotels (\$340), which offer essentially the same comforts if not the same prestige.

The course package includes lift tickets for seven days, so that when school is finished, you can spend a day skiing on your own, delighting in your new-found skills. Be sure to take advantage of that extra day: Saturday is always the best time at a Swiss resort, because almost everybody else is busy checking in or checking out, and you have the mountains practically to yourself. Then, after the lifts close, there's still enough time to make a bus-train connection to Geneva, arriving before the restaurants close. ■